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THE McALL MISSION IN FRANCE.

Quarterly Record

EDITED BY

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INTRODUCTORY.

THE foremost thought in the mind of every one in France just now is the cholera. The McAll Mission has no stations in Toulon, and the enemy has only just made its appearance at Marseilles, but before another quarter passes, the boastful science of the nineteenth century may have yet another failure to record. Meanwhile, no one can wonder that with such a terrible foe at hand, the

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people hesitate during this hot weather to set their foot in our halls, where no effort can keep the atmosphere bearable for an hour together. Still, no door is closed, and, though the supply of speakers is more limited than on any previous summer, the message of God's love is still proclaimed in and about Paris in seventy-eight different meetings each week, while, as yet, no news has reached us of the closing of any provincial station.

No new work has been undertaken this quarter; all our efforts being directed rather to the reduction of our miscellaneous expenses, which were seen to be threatening to absorb the funds intended for widening the area of our work. The more the Mission increases, and the more complex its machinery becomes, the greater is the wear and tear, and the larger the column of expenses, which cannot be avoided, but equally could not be foreseen. After considerable debate, certain tentatory measures were adopted by the Committee of Directors, which, if successful, promised to realise a considerable saving; but, as yet, their application has proved very difficult. The only subvention voted has been to Perpignan, where a talented and devoted evangelist, M. G. Chéradam, had been labouring for some time as the agent of the Société Evangélique de Genéve. Under his hands the work was prospering—prospered, indeed, so much that a larger meeting-hall became imperatively necessary—and, in default of help elsewhere, appeal was made to us. A small sum was accordingly voted to him, with which he enlarged his hall, and recommenced work with new courage. Just as we go to press, another request comes, this time from Montpellier, to which we have been reluctantly forced to answer, "Not now," and unless new funds come in, it will have to be "Never at all." And yet the field is a most promising one; work already begun, a considerable sum of money guaranteed by local friends, strong efficient support from the pastors and others; but still the answer has to be "No."

From Montauban and Bordeaux good accounts come in. In the former, the meetings will be kept on all summer, in spite of the absence of the students of the Theological Seminary who work the station during winter and spring. A very much increased attendance so much encouraged our friend, M. Paul Monod, that he determined on this step, which will doubtless be productive of much good. The mission-workers have already gained the hearts of the people. M. Monod tells how

his Bible-woman was accosted one day in the open street by the *curé* and grossly insulted, when instantly half-a-dozen workmen gathered round her, and dared the *curé* to continue his insolence, ending by escorting her home in triumph to her lodgings, while the discomfited cleric slunk off as best he might. At Bordeaux, also, no meetings have been closed this summer, though the fear of the cholera was added to the suffocating heat; and not only has the average attendance at the ordinary meetings continued good, but a Bible class of eighty members has been formed under the direction of M. le Pasteur Fuster.

During May we had the pleasure of welcoming in Paris Major A. D. F. Colquhoun, well known in Glasgow as an indefatigable worker and follower up of Moody's efforts. Major Colquhoun has undertaken the direction of our branch in Lyons, vacant through the resignation of M. le Pasteur A. Duchemin, summoned to Paris to succeed M. Lorriaux as secretary of the Société Centrale. Curiously enough MM. Colquhoun and Duchemin had been school companions long years ago, and we have no doubt that the work so successfully carried on by the one (see *Quarterly* of April, 1884) will be energetically continued by the other. We have also welcomed, we hope permanently, as an addition to our Paris staff, Mr. Webber and Miss Morgan, whose work in Meaux renders their experience particularly valuable; Mr. W. Soltau, not unknown in evangelistic circles in London; and our old friends Rev. J. Robertson and Mrs. Robertson.

A gratifying tribute of sympathy was accorded us at the recent meeting of the Synode Général de l'Eglise Réformée, held at Nantes early in June, when a vote was unanimously passed testifying to the interest the Church felt in our work, and to its gratitude for the strenuous efforts that were being put forth for the evangelisation of France.

Returning from this rapid survey of the work of the Mission all over France, we do not see much that is specially noteworthy in Paris. The success of the new central hall is, as our readers see, rebuking our want of faith. We have returned to the old hall at Belleville, the new one proving too small for the audience that crowded into it: one or two schools have been closed for the summer, more through want of teachers than of scholars, but in general satisfactory progress can be registered. On Whit-Monday, Mr. and Mrs. M^{c}All welcomed the Sunday-

school teachers and a few other friends to their house, for what we are glad to see has come to be looked upon as an annual fête. Some two hundred responded to the invitation, and seemed to find no lack of enjoyment as they exchanged their views with one another on all sorts of subjects, or tasted of the good cheer provided by our kind hosts. Short addresses were made by MM. M'All, Dhombres, Greig, Beaton, Newell, and others, and the gathering broke up just in time to escape a tremendous thunder shower, which must have mightily refreshed the down-trodden grass of 32 Rue Pierre Guérin.

It is with thankfulness, therefore, and joy that we look back on the past quarter; and though the horizon seems darkening over the one on which we enter, we press forward, knowing that "all things work together for good to them that love God."

Salle Baltimore.

On the 23rd April the Salle Baltimore was opened, and now the Gospel is nightly preached on the Boulevard Bonne Nouvelle, in the very centre of the gaiety and incredulity of Paris. This Boulevard takes its name from the church of Notre Dame de Bonne Nouvelle, which is close by our salle. This church was built in the year 1552 as parish church of a village called La Ville Neuve, which lay outside the ancient wall of the city.

That a meeting of such a character should be held in this locality seems incredible to many persons, and the remarks of a gentleman to one of the speakers, who was standing in the doorway, when informed of the kind of meeting about to be held—"Conférencese religieuses en plein Boulevard? *Vous êtes fou!*" indicates accurately this feeling. Nevertheless, this gentleman entered the hall, and was an attentive listener during the meeting.

The situation of the hall could not be better. It is central in a special sense. The Portes St. Denis and St. Martin are at the junction of four great thoroughfares, where the gentlemen of the Boulevards, the business men, the bourgeois, and the ouvriers all concentrate, and consequently the nightly audiences are of a very representative character.

In two months, over 11,000 persons have attended the

meetings, the larger part being men; many of them men of education and position. Respectful and even earnest attention is the rule, and it is deeply interesting to see the scornful or amused look give place to one of thoughtfulness and reflection, as the speakers unfold the message of "good news" they have to deliver to ears so unaccustomed to listen to such words. The singing of the hymns is here, as in all the other salles, much appreciated, and as there are many attendants coming again and again, we may hope to find that the messages spoken and sung are received, and that "in due season" much fruit will appear.

Many interesting conversations have been held with persons coming in for the first time. A lady and her daughter came in one night, and at first they seemed much amused at the proceedings. As the speaker began his address they became interested, and listened with deepest attention. They were the last to leave the hall, and on being spoken to by one of the lady-workers, the mother said: "We are strangers in Paris, and have been seeing many things and listening to many orators and professors, but this is quite different. I once heard M. Guizot, and since then I have heard nothing like the speaking of to-night."

A young gentleman, whose face seemed sorrowful, said to another worker, "I have great need of consolation," and gladly listened as she spoke to him of the Friend of the sorrowful.

Portions of the Scriptures and little books are gladly received, and many a friendly and courteous "bon soir," "je reviendrai," is given as the stream of listeners passes out to mingle again with the crowds on the Boulevards.

There is great cause for thankfulness to God that this hall has been opened, and that there has been such a large measure of success given in these opening weeks. Let prayers be made continually that "by the foolishness of preaching" many in this place may be brought into the liberty of the sons of God.

W. Soltau.

The "Mystery" at Dunkirk.

The long-promised and as long-expected Missionary Ship has at length found her way to Dunkirk. Meetings were commenced on board on the 5th inst., and though no public

announcement had been made, from want of time, there was nevertheless a good attendance—over one hundred people.

On the day following, the Cabin was uncomfortably crowded —160 present; but whatever discomfort might arise from over-crowding and heat, was more than compensated by the serious attention of the congregation. Night after night our hearts have been made glad by seeing the eagerness of the people, men and women, to secure a place on board. Half-an-hour before the time of commencing, people begin to congregate on the wharf near the vessel; on arrival at a few minutes before eight (meetings begin at 8.10) we have frequently found from fifty to eighty waiting, quietly and patiently, the signal to come on board; as soon as this is given, by running out a plank or ladder, they step on board and swiftly take their places in an orderly and becoming manner. Many have to be refused admission on board from want of room, some nights as many as 100! Their demeanour on the vessel has been such as to lead us to hope that many have received the Word with faith and joy. Some we see at every meeting, occupying as often as possible the same seat. We have several times been appealed to, when getting on board the *Mystery*, by persons on the quay who were desirous of going below, but who were momentarily held back to avoid confusion. One says: "You will allow me to come, sir, will you not? I come every day." A mother says: "Will you permit my boy to come with me, sir? I shall answer for his behaviour," &c. &c. Who can say nay to requests like these?

There are some who, as soon as a speaker begins to address the meeting, fix their eyes on him, and never take them off till the speaker has finished. Others give evidence that they approve of what is being said, for when any telling words are spoken, they nod their head as a proof, I suppose, that they assent to, and believe what is said.

Our congregations are made up of soldiers, sailors, railway-officials, "douaniers," tradesmen, petits-bourgeois, and merchants, with their wives, sons, daughters, and sisters.

When we announced a meeting for children to be held on Thursdays and Sundays, I should think quite twenty voices were heard thanking us; there was no confusion, the thanks were evidently the expression of their gratitude.

The first meeting for children was held on the 12th inst.;

there were sixty children, and about thirty adults. To the children we taught the Hymn 195 "Cantiques Populaires," (translation of "When He Cometh"), and also the 16th verse of the 3rd chapter of St. John, laying stress on the fact that these being the words of Jesus, were to be relied on and believed. We begged the dear children always to remember this precious text, and in order to help their memory we encouraged them to repeat the words often to each other, or to their parents. Before concluding, we invited the children who could repeat the verse from memory to do so, promising to each a Scripture-card printed in colours; several availed themselves of our offer, and acquitted themselves very well indeed of their task.

Monsieur Vesson writes me to say that the interest in the meetings is fully kept up in every way. 170 children present on the boat on Sunday afternoon. We hope to organise a permanent weekly meeting for children. D. R.

McAll Mission Work out of France.

Although the work of which we are about to speak was carried on in Scotland, it still was a direct result of the McAll Mission, and so may be interesting to the many to whom that Mission is dear.

A young lady, just returned from Paris, where, notwithstanding the restraints of a French boarding-school, she had been able to visit and become deeply interested in the Conférences, was told that there were many French sailors in the port, and was asked by the chaplain to go down and hold a service on Sunday. With much fear and trembling, but knowing she must not put aside the offered service, she consented. Accompanied by her sister she went down to the docks and soon found the Seamen's Chapel. There were about thirty sailors present. The chaplain began the service with a short prayer in English, which was translated sentence by sentence, the men being most reverent and respectful, but using their eyes as well as their ears. This was followed by the reading of the "pearl of parables," and in the stillness which succeeded the gracious words, "*Il était perdu mais il est retrouvé*," one of the young ladies sang "Viens." This took hold of the men, and there was a quiet and devotional spirit in the little

gathering, such as one could not have expected from these poor fellows. They listened with a pleased attention to the sermon, a free translation of one of the discourses of the dear old chaplain, himself an old sailor, who knows well how best to tell over again to seamen the old, old story.

When the service had finished, the young ladies went among the men with kindly words, and it was so pleasant to see how eager they were to shake hands and express their thanks for the service. They begged them to come back again, and so next Sunday the service was repeated. By that time some hymn-books had been obtained, and how the men did enjoy the singing! "*Sur toi je me repose*" was a special favourite.

These services were continued during four months to a constantly changing company of seamen; for the men were employed by a French company to take out new ships to China, and as each crew departed a new lot came. Thus, at least, sixty or seventy must have had this chance of hearing the "glad tidings to all people."

Many of them begged for tracts and hymn-books, and each received a copy of the New Testament.

It was only a little thing to do, a few seeds to scatter, but the result is in God's hand, and there may be granted fruit after many days. A. G. R.

Les deux Leçons.

A ta voix longtemps rebelle,
Infidèle,
J'errais loin de ton regard,
L'avenir paraissait sombre
Et dans l'ombre,
Je m'avançais au hasard.

Je vivais sans te connaître,
O mon Maître,
Ta voix m'appelait en vain.
Tu m'attendis au passage
Mon voyage,
M'amena sur ton chemin.

Tu me dis : Oh ! viens, approche
Sans reproche,
Ton Sauveur te recevra ;
Pauvre brebis égarée,
Retrouvée,
Ton Berger t'accueillera.

Il t'acquit par sa souffrance,
L'assurance
De la vie et du pardon.
Crois à sa miséricorde ;
Il t'accorde
Dès ce jour un nouveau don.

Et mon âme fut sauvée,
Délivrée.
Je dis : Règne sur mon cœur ;
Je le sens, oui, tu pardonnes
Et tu donnes
La paix, l'espoir, le bonheur.

Désormais je voudrais vivre
Pour te suivre,
Toi mon Rédempteur, mon Roi ;
Toi mon Guide, ma Lumière,
Sur la terre
Chaque jour dirige moi.

Mais pour toi que puis-je faire,
Divin frère ?
Je veux t'aimer à mon tour
Pour te consacrer ma vie,
Je t'en prie,
Donne moi bien plus d'amour.

Il faudra dans ma faiblesse
Et sans cesse.
Livrer des combats sanglants ;
Ah ! permets donc que je quitte
Tout de suite
L'arène des combattants.

Sur les rives éternelles
Que mes aîles
Puissent reposer bientôt ;
Le vent pousse mon navire
Et j'aspire
A dèbarquer au plus tôt.

Je soupire après mon Père ;
Ma prière
Vers le ciel prend son essor ;
De la maison paternelle,
Dieu fidèle,
Ouvre moi les portes d'or.

Tu répondis : Pas encore !
Si l'aurore
Des cieux a brillé pour toi,
Deviens humble et saint, remporte
De la sorte
La victoire de la foi :

Poursuis ton pélerinage
Prends courage
Avec toi je combattrai,
Puis, au jour de ma venue
Dans la nue
A moi je t'attirai.

Plus de combats, plus d'alarmes,
Ni de larmes ;
Le bon Berger te paîtra,
Là, dans la terre promise,
Mon Eglise,
Glorieuse paraîtra.

M. MONOD.

Nantes.

[Pressure of work, or some other *force majeure* having prevented our young friend, M. Biau, from sending us the account we had asked of the work he directs, we give instead the translation of a part of a letter from M. de Richmond, of La Rochelle, printed in the *Feuille Populaire.*]

The McAll Mission has enlarged since 1873, it has now a

Salle de Conférences at Nantes, and these conférences are directed by a Saintongeais, M. Biau, with the help of the pasteur in whose house I lived, a Saintongeais too, M. Abel Roufineau. How eagerly, that evening, I crossed the great city! The Loire is broad enough to remind one of the Seine; and alas! all the quarters in which the working classes congregate, resemble one another. I was no longer at Belleville, where ten years ago I had heard Mr. McAll speak; I was in the heart of the working part of Nantes. Like all the meeting halls, that of Nantes has only one fault; it is much, much too small. Admission, therefore, is by card; but it was at once filled with a thoughtful and most attentive audience. M. Biau has with good reason gained the sympathies of these people, for he announces Jesus Christ in such a way as to prepare the heart to receive Him, and his style, always simple, is at the same time thoroughly French—that is, clear, distinct, intelligible to everybody, at the same time elegant and nervous. In him, Mr. McAll has made an excellent choice. Unfortunately, the civic authorities do not yet allow any singing, as was also the case for a long time at Montauban, much to the injury of the meeting. To this audience, so well-disposed, I drew out the contrast between Jesus Christ and Peter (Matt. xxiv. 30 to the end), how the one had begun by saying, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," to end triumphant in prayer, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt;" whereas the other had begun by asserting, "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee," to end by that cowardly denial, "I know not the man," because he had not prayed; and from that I went on to point out Jesus Christ as "the way, the truth, and the life."

The venerable President of the Provincial Synod and of the Presbytery of Brest, M. le pasteur Berthe, instanced facts of his own experience in the "Conférences Populaires"; people who had found patience in suffering and consolation in death through their faith in Christ, and through the Gospel which has the words of eternal life, and as he quoted example after example he commanded the assent of every one, so true is it that light springs from life. To the audience, now completely won over, M. Bian showed that Jesus is "the light," and many hands were stretched out to get the tracts, and all promised to return to the next meeting.

I left the hall with the conviction that at Nantes, as every-

where else, the Spirit of God is exerting His sovereign influence upon the heart and conscience, and that the meeting hall is indeed the house of God, the very gate of heaven. R.

Toulouse and Tulle.

My Dear Mr. M^c^All,—Most likely you have seen the dear people of 15 Rue ——, and have heard from them of the good meetings we have been having here, but I thought that a letter from your young "old" friend might not come amiss to you.

I began by visiting your stations in the south and west, spending two or three days at Toulouse, and devoting several evenings to Tulle. As I was anxious to reach my native Poitou before the 24th, I could not stay long at Toulouse: I gave you and my friend Chaigne only one evening there, in the Salle St. Michel. It was quite full, and a more attentive and sympathetic audience I have never seen. M. Chaigne had announced a special meeting for the next day at four o'clock at Arnaud Bernard, and, in spite of the unfavourable hour, we had about thirty people; perhaps we should have had more had they not been invited also to the evening service in the church. I was delighted, as were also M. Viel and my friend Chaigne, to see these people fearlessly crossing the threshold of the churches, and coming in such large numbers to the meeting. My visits, of which I was able to make several, greatly encouraged me, as I saw signs of a real attachment to the Gospel, and to those who preach it.

Not to use up space, for I intend to allow you only four pages, I shall say nothing of Brive, which is not your station, but confine my remarks to Tulle. Thank God I have nothing but good news to give you of it. I spent there, along with M. Cremer, one of the best men on earth, four evenings, three this week and one last week. Our audiences have numbered, beginning with the first night, 50, 75, 80, and 85. At the two first meetings we allowed children to come in, but at the last two there was no room for them, and a special meeting had to be held at four o'clock, when they came out from school. At the first we had 40, at the second 60. So much for figures: the feeling among our hearers was excellent. Many were there for the first time, and looked very much interested as they listened to the new things we told them in

the name of Jesus Christ; and besides these there were several old friends who had been gained in previous meetings. The working population is not badly disposed, quite the contrary. One evening we distributed 600 tracts among the 2500 workmen employed in the gun-factory, and they were well received. My impression is that a serious and wide-spread work could be accomplished in this town; the ground does not seem to be hard. But M. Cremer is quite alone.

I must stop if I am to keep my promise of four pages. Pray remember me to Mrs. McAll, and believe me, yours affectionately, J. SAINTON.

Marks of Progress.

I have been often asked during and since my late visit to Paris, "What signs of progress do you see, or do you see any?" Most certainly, *Yes*.

The first thing I note, on comparing my experience of this with former years, has often been remarked by others, it is the avidity of the people for tracts and little Protestant books. When travelling in the cars, I generally began by turning over my packet of tracts, giving one to the conductor, one to some one beside me, a picture to some bright-eyed child perhaps. Then some one near would be sure to ask politely for one, and instantly hands would be stretched out, well-dressed gentlemen and ladies, whose appearance had made me feel cowardly about offering tracts, begging themselves for them, and reading them with eager curiosity. Readers may have heard of the large *Lavoirs* or public laundries, the resort not only of the washer-women, but of all the women of the people one might almost say. These ladies have begun to visit, with success for the most part, and not a little encouragement. Once however, on such a visit, my companion and I were turned out by the foreman, whose objections were evidently not catholic, as he exclaimed he would have no clericalism. I do not know for what he took us, but the indignation of the women at his proceedings was worth seeing. "Am I not to have a book, then?" said one woman to my friend. "If monsieur permits," she replied. "No, I do not want any of your clericalism," said the man, who perhaps took us for *sisters*. "May I go outside the door, and get one?" she said. "You may do what you like

outside, there my jurisdiction ceases." So troops followed us outside the door, and I should think nearly all the women were supplied. France craves pure and healthy reading at this moment. A supply is wanted, and a supply of the very best, the most attractive and the most pointed that can be got. Will no one help to refurnish the baskets of those who thus go forth bearing precious seed?

Here is another fact that struck me in connection with our meetings. The French people have been developing the art of listening! A few years ago, if a discourse fell into a dull sermonising strain for ten minutes, it was enough to scatter half the audience. They would not follow anything but what they liked, and no ceremony deterred them from making use of the door, whose constant opening and shutting, with the diminution of the audience, was likely to read the monotonous speaker a sad but useful lesson. Now, I must say, in my late visit, I have several times seen the people's patience tried. I have heard discourses which would have been thought long in Scotland, and I have sat on pins expecting the people would begin to go out: to my sheer amazement they never moved, but still sat drinking in to the very end. The restless spirit, the love of novelty seems gone, and an intense desire to understand has taken its place. Of course, I speak of the older meetings. In the grand new meeting on the Boulevard Bonne Nouvelle you have the same shifting, restless scene as in former years, also in all the meetings there are hangers-on about the door whom the lengthy speaker would do well to remember, as their patience is anything but inexhaustible! But even at Bonne Nouvelle, where the men from the boulevard come in—café loungers or hurried business-men, as the case may be—staring and wondering, looking in their hymn-books to find the text if the speaker happens to be so unlucky as to name chapter and verse, even there earnest speaking will retain the audience spell-bound, and more than half always sit still to the end. As for Rivoli, it continues to be *packed* full of men, night after night, week after week, year after year without fail.

What will come of it all? For, after all, in this intent and constant listening one may see the springing up of the seed, and yet it may be only the seed sown on stony ground. Is there any evidence of deep striking roots, of ripening grain?

To find that, one must visit in the homes of the people; and

I did indeed find it, and can testify. Not that the mass of society has changed, as some people impatiently seem to expect, not that the powers of unbelief and immorality have let go their hold, as they shall yet do if the prayers of God's people mean anything; but that, in the very centre of that corrupt and decadent society, in places which are as the very seat of Satan, little spots of light are appearing, and are growing, though imperceptibly, wider and purer and brighter. I speak not only of Christian individuals, but of Christian *homes*, Christian fathers, Christian mothers, children brought up in the fear of God, young men going out to fight the battle of life clothed in the armour of truth and faith and purity. Little clusters there are of such families in every station, of the people, and living right among the people, as the early Christians must have lived among their heathen fellow-citizens, a wonder to many by their faith and thankfulness and cheerfulness in bearing adversity. I visited one such family in their miserable hot little garret. I found the boys preparing dinner for their father, who had not yet come home from his work. The smell of the frying-pan was oppressive, and the work evidently missed a woman's hands. Two of the children are at school; the eldest ought to be at work, but, like so many others, is at present without it, owing to the badness of trade; he is the only one who looks downcast and disappointed, poor fellow! It is doubtless hard for the widower to have to support all, with no woman's hands to mend and make; but he came in full of brightness, just in time to take his food and set off again to the meeting. I begged them not to mind me, and after the boy-cook had poured the steaming mess into plates, they reverently bowed their heads while the father asked a blessing. After the meal was over, we had time for a hymn and a prayer, and then we set out to walk to the Rue Letellier. Michel talked to me all the way telling me of his wife, who had died a year ago, but died in the Lord, and of the joy he had in believing that his dear children were following the Lord too.

"How did it all come about?"

"I used to mock at God, but I was uneasy in my mind. My wife used often to urge me to go to church, and I went now and then, even to confession, to satisfy her; but I believed nothing, and continually insulted God. One night a man

I knew proposed that I should go to the Rue Letellier with him. 'How much is to pay?' I said. 'Nothing.' 'Nothing! but I should be turned out. You belong to the concern, I suppose, but I don't; I have no business to go.' 'Oh no, it is for everybody; I can promise you won't be turned out.' So, fearing and trembling, I went. But, sure enough, no one asked me why I had come, or told me to walk out, so I sat still. What I heard laid hold of me even that first evening, and I came back again and again, getting more and more anxious each time. But in about three weeks I saw it all, and my whole life has been changed ever since. Oh, if you knew what I used to be!"

"The reason I got peace so quickly," he said to me on another occasion, "was that I had been such a very bad man, I had no other hope. My wife was much longer of laying hold, she was puzzled about her own good works: indeed, she never got full assurance till she was on her death-bed, but *then* she did. And now she is in heaven, and I and my boys are on the way there; oh, I never can tell the goodness of God enough!"

This man has the true missionary spirit, watches for opportunities to testify for Christ, or to get others within hearing of the Gospel.

M. L. DODDS.

(*To be continued.*)

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